

ROCKAWAYS RECOVERY, P4 • NYPD ON TRIAL, P3 • INDY FICTION, P15

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #186, May 1–May 31, 2013
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE



ROB LAQUINTA

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The Indypendent is a New York-based free newspaper published 13 times a year on Mondays for our print and online audience of more than 100,000 readers. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 700 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

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community calendar

SAT MAY 4

9pm-3am • \$10
BENEFIT: INDY SPRING DANCE PARTY. Join The Indypendent and two great Brook-lyn DJs as we dance the night away in a beautiful loft space in Bushwick. Featured performers are DJ Stylus and DJ Shakey. Thanks to Starr Street Studios for providing the space! All proceeds will help to keep The Indypendent publishing.
207 Starr St, 3rd Fl, Bklyn
212-904-1282 • indypendent.org

MON MAY 6

7pm • \$10 suggested donation
SCREENING: AFTER INNOCENCE. The film tells the story of seven men who were wrongfully imprisoned for decades and then exonerated with DNA evidence, and their efforts to rebuild their lives.
Revolution Books.
146 W 26th St
212-691-3345 • revolutionbooksnyc.org

FRI MAY 10

5pm • Free
MEETUP: PRISONER LETTER WRITING GROUP. Join a new group that'll be writing letters to prisoners. The focus will be on those who tend to receive less attention and mail while incarcerated, including LGBTQI-identified prisoners, women, and youth.
Bluestockings Bookstore
172 Allen St
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

FRI MAY 10 – FRI MAY 17

SCREENING: WORKERS UNITE FILM FESTI-VAL. NYC celebrates Global Labor Solidarity. A showcase of films highlighting workers in the U.S. and around the world in their efforts to unite and organize.
May 10-16: Cinema Village
12 E 12th St
May 17: Brecht Forum
451 West St
workersunitefilmfestival.org

SAT MAY 11

8pm • \$18 suggested, no one turned away
PERFORMANCE: MOTHER'S DAY CONCERT AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE. A Benefit for The Children's Defense Fund. Featuring perfor-mances by KJ Denhart, Alix Dobkin, emma's

revolution, John Flynn, Terre Roche, Claudia Goddard and more.
Peoples' Voice Café
The Community Church of New York
40 E 35th St
peoplesvoicecafe.org

TUE MAY 14

7:30pm • Sliding scale \$5/\$10/\$15
DISCUSSION: GLOBAL CAPITALISM- MONTHLY UPDATE. Join economist Richard D. Wolff for an overview and analysis of major economic events that happened during the last month.
Brecht Forum
451 West St
212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

SAT MAY 18

9am-4pm • \$25/\$15 low income
ORGANIZING: NEW YORK TROUBLE-MAKERS SCHOOL. A day of skill-building workshops and panels discussing strategies to reenergize the labor movement.
The High School for Health Professions and Human Services.
345 E 15th St
718-284-4144 • labornotes.org

SAT MAY 18

2-5 pm • Free
HAT PARTY: LIZ CHRISTY COMMUNITY GARDEN. Celebrate the summer opening of Liz Christy Community Garden, NYC's origi-nal community garden founded in 1973. Don't forget to wear a garden-themed hat.
Corner of E Houston St and Bowery
lizchristygarden.us

SAT MAY 25 – MON MAY 27, SAT JUNE 1 – SUN JUNE 2

EXHIBIT: WASHINGTON SQUARE OUT-DOOR ART EXHIBIT. More than one hundred artists and artisans exhibit their work.
E 12th St to W 3rd St along University Pl
wsoae.org

FRI MAY 31

7-9pm • Free
EVENT: JEREMY SCAHILL AT THE NEW SCHOOL. Scahill will be in conversation with Spencer Ackerman, a national security reporter and blogger for *Wired* magazine. Jeremy Scahill is the National Security

UPCOMING EVENTS

THU, MAY 2 • 7:30pm

CO-SPONSOR: SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS WATCH & CODE PINK
Rock the Boat, Cross the Line & Speak Truth to Power: An Evening with Roy Bourgeois and Medea Benjamin
Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

THU, MAY 9 • 6:00pm

EXHIBIT OPENING:
AFRICAN PALESTINIANS OF JERUSALEM
ANDREW COURTNEY
Photographer Andrew Courtney presents a photo-documentary exhib-it of the little known African Palestinian community whose lives and history are centered in the heart of the old city Jerusalem.
Free

MON, MAY 20 • 7:30pm

QUEBEC STUDENT UPRISING
REFLECTIONS FROM MONTREAL
An interactive discussion and slideshow on the 2012 Quebec student uprising by Stefan Christoff, author of the recent booklet *Le fond de l'air est rouge*.
Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

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THAT MOVES
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(btwn Bank and Bethune)

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register online:
brechtforum.org
212-242-4201

Correspondent for the *Nation* magazine and author of *Dirty Wars: The World is a Battlefield*.
The New School
Tishman Auditorium, Alvin Johnson/J. M. Kaplan Hall
66 West 12th St
newschool.edu

FRI MAY 31

7pm • Free
EVENT: CRITICAL MASS, MANHATTAN. Bikers take over the streets of the city in cel-ebation of bicycling as a mode of transport! Meet up at Union Square North
917-577-5621 • times-up.org

SAT JUNE 1

1pm • Free / Bus tickets \$20
RALLY: FREE BRADLEY MANNING. June 1 is the International Day of Action to Support Bradley Manning! Join the Bradley Manning Support Network and others at Fort Meade to protest his detention and court martial, scheduled for June 3. Buses are being organized from NYC and will leave at 7:30am from 1270 Broadway; see website for ticket details.
Fort Meade, Maryland
Reece Road and US 175
bradleymanning.org

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at Jefferson St.
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172 Allen St.
LES People's Federal Credit Union
39 Avenue B
Native Bean
50 Avenue A
Croissanteria
68 Avenue A
Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.
Tompkins Square Library
331 E. 10th St.
Cinema Village
29 E. 12th St.
St. Mark's Books
31 Third Ave.
Mamoun's Falafel Restaurant
22 St. Mark's Pl.
4th St. Food Co-op
58 E. 4th St.
Theater 80
80 St. Marks Pl.
Jefferson Market Library
425 Ave. of the Americas

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.
McNally Jackson Books
52 Prince St.
Yippie Cafe
9 Bleecker St.
Shakespeare & Co.
716 Broadway
Hudson Park Library
66 Leroy St.
92nd St. Y
39 Avenue B
Brecht Forum
451 West St.
14TH TO 96TH ST.
TEKSERVE
119 W. 23rd St.
Epiphany Library
228 E. 23rd St.
Muhlenberg Library
209 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea Square Restaurant
W. 23rd St. & Ninth Ave.
Columbus Library
942 Tenth Ave.
Manhattan Neighborhood
Network
537 W. 59th St.

ABOVE 96TH ST.

Bloomingdale Library
150 W. 100th St.
Book Culture
526 W. 112th St.
Aguilar Library
172 E. 110th St.
Harlem Library
9 W. 124th St.
George Bruce Library
518 W. 125th St.
Hamilton Grange Library
503 W. 145th St.
Uptown Sister's Books
W. 156th St. & Amsterdam
BROOKLYN
Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Pkwy.
Brooklyn Library
1044 Eastern Pkwy.
Tea Lounge
Union St. & Seventh Ave.
Verb Café
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.
Purity Diner
43 Underhill Ave

Pacific Street Library
25 Fourth Ave.
Outpost Café
1014 Fulton St.
YWCA of Brooklyn
30 3rd Ave.
Wyckoff Starr
30 Wyckoff Ave.
Kaisa's Café
146 Bedford Ave.
Bedford Library
496 Franklin Ave.
Parkside Deli
203 Parkside Ave.
QUEENS
Court Square Diner
45-30 23rd St.
Aubergine Cafe
49-12 Skillman Ave.
La Terraza 7
40-19 Gleane St.
Queens Pride Center
77-11 37th St.
Jackson Heights Library
35-81 81st St.
Flushing Library
41-17 Main St.

BRONX

Mott Haven Library
321 E. 140th St.
The Point
940 Garrison Ave.
Mothers on the Move
928 Intervale Ave.
Hunt's Point Library
877 Southern Blvd.
Woodstock Library
761 E. 160th St.
Mi Casa Bakery
18 E. Bedford Park Blvd.
STATEN ISLAND
St. George Library Center
5 Central Ave.
Port Richmond Library
75 Bennett St.
Everything Goes Book Café
208 Bay St.

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FOR FREE PEOPLE**

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NYPD on Trial

BY ALEX VITALE

The opportunities for a sustained look inside the NYPD are few and far between. While it has always been an insular and opaque institution, it has become doubly so since 9/11 expanded its intelligence and anti-terrorism functions. That is one of the many reasons that the federal trial (*Floyd v. City of New York*) on the Department's stop-and-frisk practices has taken on such import. Normally closed off from journalists, academics, the public and even the City Council committees charged with its oversight, it is only through litigation that we have been able to peer through the NYPD's blue walls at some of its inner workings.

The view has not been a pleasant one, but it has been instructive. Since the trial began on March 18, we've been treated to a series of revelations about the callous attitudes of officers on the streets and the willful manipulation of statistics by the brass (see sidebar).

While revelations of misconduct by individual officers and failed policies by police leadership are not new, it is rare to see them uncovered in such a systematic and sustained way. In the past, only major scandals have created this kind of opportunity. In 1970 the Knapp Commission, created by Mayor John Lindsay, investigated allegations of widespread corruption made by Det. Frank Serpico and Sgt. David Durk. A long investigation followed by extensive and dramatic public hearings uncovered a broad practice of pay-offs within the detective

ranks to overlook vice operations. These hearings led to a major reorganization of the Detectives Bureau and the creation of internal anti-corruption measures that remain in place today.

The Mollen Commission, appointed by Mayor David Dinkins in 1992, uncovered smaller scale but more intensive police corruption in Harlem's 30th Precinct. A group of officers were found to have been engaged in the systematic theft of money and drugs, as well as in the reselling of those drugs.

Since then the department has avoided any major outside inspections.

In the wake of the beating and torture of Abner Louima in 1997, Mayor Rudy Giuliani created the Task Force on Police/Community Relations. The Task Force had no real power of investigation and its recommendations were sarcastically dismissed by the mayor.

Since then there have been no real public investigations of the NYPD. Local District Attorneys have the authority to investigate corrupt or illegal practices, and the Civilian Complaint Review Board can investigate individual cases of misconduct towards the public, but neither of these bodies looks at the patterns and practices at the heart of the new invasive policing that dominates the NYPD. That policing has resulted in five million stops since 2004, 88 percent of which have not ended up in an arrest or a summons.

In part it is this lack of public accountability that has driven calls for the creation of an Inspector General with the power to forcefully investigate the NYPD's operations.

While this new entity would be independent of the police, it would nonetheless be under the control of the mayor, which raises questions as to its potential for effectiveness under a leader enthralled by or under the political sway of the NYPD.

It is in this context that advocates for police reform have come increasingly to rely on the kinds of litigation that *Floyd* represents. This is one of the few situations in which police officials can be called in and publicly questioned under oath. It also allows for a structured forum for the presentation of the personal narratives of the effects of improper police conduct on the lives of actual New Yorkers.

The trial is expected to continue well into May. Whatever the ultimate outcome of the *Floyd* case, it is playing an important role in exposing NYPD practices and shaping the political debate about policing in New York. This case is having a definite impact on the mayoral race, as candidates have been forced to take clear positions on a vari-

ety of policing issues that have been largely ignored in past elections. While community organizing and policy work have aided in this increased political awareness, impact litigation such as the *Floyd* case will continue to be an essential tool in resisting the power of the NYPD to close itself off from public scrutiny and criticism.

Alex Vitale is an associate professor of sociology at Brooklyn College and author of City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York (New York University Press). You can follow him on Twitter at @avitale.



MARLENA BUCZEVA

COURT TESTIMONY: REVELATIONS FROM BEHIND THE BLUE WALL OF SILENCE

Now in its second month, *Floyd v. City of New York* is being argued in the Southern District of New York Courthouse, located just steps from One Police Plaza in downtown Manhattan. Brought by the Center for Constitutional Rights, the class-action lawsuit alleges that the NYPD violated the Constitution's 4th and 14th Amendments and the 1964 Civil Rights Act by routinely stopping and frisking black and Latino New Yorkers based on their skin color. The number of stop-and-frisks hit a record high of 685,724 under the Bloomberg administration in 2011, and almost 90 percent of those stopped in the last several years were black or Latino.

Here are some of the most eye-opening revelations to date:

NYPD COMMISSIONER RAY KELLY VIEWS STOP-AND-FRISK AS A FEAR TACTIC

State Senator Eric Adams, a 22-year veteran of the NYPD, testified that he raised concerns about the "disproportionate" number of young black and Latino men stopped by police during a July 2010 meeting with Governor David Paterson and other officials. Among those present was Ray Kelly, who, according to Adams, responded "that he targeted or focused on that group because he wanted to instill fear in them, every time they leave their home, they could be stopped by the police."

"I was shocked to hear that, and I told him that that was illegal, and that's not what the stop and frisk was supposed to be used for, and that's not what the law allows it to be used for," Adams testified. He added that Kelly's response was, "How else will we get rid of guns?"

POLICE OFFICERS ARE FORCED BY THEIR SUPERIORS TO MEET QUOTAS, EVEN IF IT MEANS MAKING UNWARRANTED STOPS

Among the first witnesses called to testify were NYPD whistleblowers Pedro Serrano and Adhyl Polanco, who secretly recorded supervisors demanding that officers issue 20 summonses, conduct five stop-and-frisks — known as "250s" — and make one arrest per month.

"We were handcuffing kids for no reason," Polanco testified about his time working in the South Bronx's 41st Precinct.

Serrano, who worked in South Bronx's 40th Precinct, recorded a superior telling him to find "the right people at the right time, the right location." When pressed by Serrano to clarify who these "right people" were, he said, "I told you at roll call, and I have no problem telling you this, male blacks 14 to 20, 21."

Polanco and Serrano described a culture of intimidation in which superiors retaliated against officers who failed to meet or spoke out about quotas. Polanco testified that supervisors would make sure he met quotas by riding with him in the police car and identifying people to stop, or calling him to respond to incidents he didn't observe. "Sometimes they have male in handcuffs, and they will call for us to — obviously, we were not there — to come either issue the summons, issue the 250, or even arrest the person," he testified.

NYPD COMMANDING OFFICER ADMITS TO SETTING QUOTAS, LEGALIZED IN THE NAME OF "PERFORMANCE GOALS"

Deputy Chief Michael Marino of East New York's 75th Precinct testified that when he became Commanding Officer of the precinct in 2002, he set "performance goals" or "standards" of 10 summonses and one arrest per month. Marino justified his action by indicating that, "As per an administrative guide that was present at the time, I set the standards as was mandated to me by the police department."

He was asked, "And that was a quota, right?" "No."

"You call it a performance goal?" "Yes."

Quotas for the NYPD are illegal under New York labor law, but

the city maintains that "performance goals" that do not include punishments for officers who fail to meet them are not.

Marino testified that upon entering the 75th Precinct, he learned that "the 400 or so officers assigned to patrol all saw exactly five summonses every month, no more, no less." He added, "It told me that they had set their own quota."

NYPD ELIDES THE FACTS

In 2007, the NYPD's Office of Management Analysis and Planning commissioned a study by the RAND Corporation to evaluate if the department's execution of stop-and-frisk was driven by racial bias.

Testimony at the trial suggests that the NYPD pressured the report's authors to take the edge off some of their original language. Terry Riley, who oversaw the project on behalf of the NYPD, testified that under the terms of their contract the RAND Corporation had agreed to take the NYPD's concerns "into consideration."

The NYPD did bring up concerns about early drafts, and some of the department's comments led to changes to the final report. In the first draft, the authors wrote of "disturbing evidence of unequal treatment across race groups." After the NYPD raised objections, that phrase was altered to say that there was "some evidence" of such unequal treatment. In another early draft, RAND asked, "Is the value of one arrest worth the cost of nine stops of innocent pedestrians?" Following further comments by the police department, the words "innocent pedestrians" appeared in the final draft as "suspects who committed no crime."

— Alina Mogilyanskaya

Sources: Center for Constitutional Rights, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York transcripts, The New York Times

Rebuilding in the Rockaways

HOW WE FOUND COMMUNITY (AND SOLUTIONS) AMID CRISIS

BY DIEGO IBANEZ

Some say you can't create a crisis just as much as you can't predict the solution. When my friends and I arrived on the corner of 113th St. and Rockaway Beach Blvd., less than 48 hours after Hurricane Sandy ravaged the peninsula of Queens, buildings were still on fire. A man told me that his whole house had just burned down and that his family had nowhere to go. I took a picture of him in front of his burned-down block and shared it with the network of activists I was working with. Food had begun to rot and water was running out — a sense of panic was in the air. That night, from within the flooded storefront we had occupied and transformed into a guerrilla distribution hub, we had our first community meeting.

When you feed people you get invited to their table, and once you're at their table, you get invited into their lives. Every night we turned off the generators that powered the lights, locked the doors and huddled in a circle. We passed around the flashlight as if it were a microphone. "Even though I've lost everything, I've never felt better in my life," said Mama Rose, the block's matriarch. Most nights we cried together, but at the end of each meeting we chanted, "You are not alone!"

At first we started with a simple kitchen, then a distribution hub and then a demand: a just recovery process — one that helped recover from all forms of crisis, water related or otherwise.

In the second week we realized that we needed a medical clinic. Using our network, we called for doctors, nurses and social workers. Volunteers flocked to our hubs and we needed more space. Across the street we saw a fur coat store — so fancy that you couldn't wear their products in San Francisco without risking red paint being splattered all over you in protest.

"You're crazy," the landlord told me. "You wanna do what?"

"We want to turn this store into a people's clinic," I said. "Think about it."



ALL, TOGETHER: Members of the Far Rockaway community and Occupy Sandy discuss ideas for starting worker-run businesses.

The next day he gave us the keys. It took us 14 hours to clean up the whole store, repair doors, install lights, shelves, curtains and beds, rig up the generators and sanitize everything. Soon doctors and nurses were filling prescriptions and treating patients inside the fur coat store. The role of private and public property was challenged.

A week later, the lights went on. Things were going to be okay after all. In some ways, that was the happiest day for everyone. But I sensed a disconnect as people detached from the community, plugged back into the system and switched on their TVs. The fairy tale of a post-capitalist community was over. It was time for us to restructure our organizing.

THE FORGOTTEN ZONE

We began moving farther and farther east along the peninsula until I arrived in Far

Rockaway — the forgotten zone. With a young population and a high crime rate, Far Rockaway is no stranger to crisis. In a sense, it's been dealing with a continuous series of crises for the past half century, since Robert Moses dumped thousands of poor people displaced by urban renewal projects into public housing on this remote spit of land.

Recovery in Far Rockaway looked different. We found youth that dropped out of high school, many who didn't know how to read. Unemployment seemed to be on everyone's mind. Younger kids had missed weeks of school due to flooding or relocation and were saddled with thick make-up packets.

Using a small Pentecostal church as our base, we grew ties with the migrant Latino community and started an after-school program. The plan was to pull from outside volunteers, like the thousands on our lists, to tutor older teens. However, when the room filled with younger kids, the older teens who would otherwise be on the streets themselves became the mentors.

In addition to receiving help with their homework, kids ate dinner and participated in lessons put on by Occupy Sandy volunteers, which focused on topics such as climate change, democratic decision-making and art. At one point the kids sang Bob Dylan's song "George Jackson":

*Prison guards, they cursed him
As they watched him from above
But they were frightened of his power
They were scared of his love*

A young girl wanted to know why they were scared of his love.

"He was trapped in a cage for so many years," I explained. "But his mind was free with the love of knowledge. Some people don't want us to have that kind of freedom, that's why we gotta fight for it."

At supper, the kids held hands and gave thanks for one thing in their lives. Many gave thanks for the after-school program and then we raised our arms and yelled "Fuerza!"

'EVERYTHING'S POLITICAL'

In addition to youth education, we focused on building political power for the long-term recovery. "Everything's political," we said. "Even the storm." We established a political education program called Wildfire, comprised of community members who emerged as natural organizers throughout the early recovery struggle.

In some ways, it was one community encountering another. Occupy Sandy emerged from a network of Occupy Wall Street participants who had dispersed to work on a variety of projects. In going to the Rockaways we were reading outside of ourselves and into communities most affected by the capitalist system we had been protesting only a year before. Our role was not very different from the one played by the international community after the 1994 Zapatista insurrection in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas: thousands went there to bear witness, a network-style tactic the U.S. military dubbed a "netwar."

But in other ways, our role wasn't to bear witness at all. It was to expand the network itself, and help ignite a group that would begin solving other kinds of structural issues in their communities long after the storm receded. At a Wildfire retreat in upstate New York in early April, we mapped where this group fit into the larger picture, from Occupy Sandy to Occupy Wall Street to student uprisings and international anti-austerity movements.

Meanwhile, other community members were still trying to figure out how they were going to pay rent. With the storm came even more unemployment and suspicion of outsiders snatching up all the rebuilding jobs.

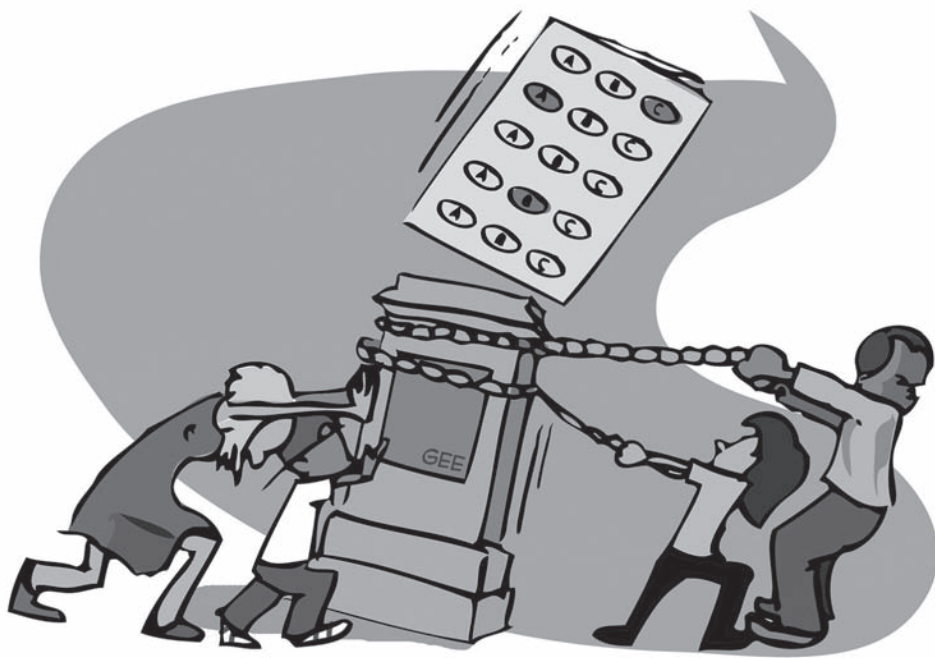
WORKER-RUN COOPERATIVES

In the upstairs of a small church, a packed room held the faces of the dispossessed. Black and English-speaking on one side, Brown and Spanish-speaking on the other.

"Why should you wait for jobs to come



CONNECTING THE DOTS: Rockaways residents joined the 40,000 people who rallied in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 17 to call for more aggressive government action to halt climate change.



GARY MARTIN

The War on Teachers Harms Children Too

Editor's Note: The culture of high stakes standardized testing has become increasingly pervasive in public schools over the past decade. Thanks to federal legislation like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, the future of teachers' jobs and of whole schools can ride on the whether students fill in the bubbles on their answer sheets correctly. Now, students and parents across the country — in places like Florida, Illinois, Colorado and Washington State — are rejecting the exams. In April, hundreds of New York City students refused to sit for a battery of standardized tests. Thousands more across the state also opted out. One of their most vocal supporters has been Fordham professor Mark Naison, who reflects on the testing regime and the opposition it has sparked in this short essay:

BY MARK NAISON

When I first got involved in education activism four years ago, I did so because elected officials in New York and around the nation were blaming public school teachers for problems that were not of their making. Under the mantle of “school reform,” they were trying to subject them to numbers-based “accountability” protocols that would squeeze the life out of teaching.

I saw the best teachers I knew — those who were my former students and those with whom I worked on Bronx community history projects — feel as though they had become demonized and marginalized by people who had little real-life understanding of what their job entailed. Since they lacked the power to speak freely about what was happening to them, I felt it was my duty to speak on their behalf.

Four years later, there is still just as much pain and rage among the nation's teachers. Now that I am publicly identified as a “teachers advocate,” I probably get four or five emails or Facebook messages a week from teachers around the nation describing the fear, stress, humiliation and erosion of professional autonomy they experience as student test scores become the major indicator of judging teacher effectiveness. It is because of such experiences that I have launched, with the support of United Opt Out, a Teachers Oral History Project that will allow teachers' viewpoints on current education policies to be recorded and preserved.

But in April, as I became involved with an Opt Out movement in New York State that has inspired thousands of families to demand that their children be allowed to sit out state tests, I have become even more appalled by what current school policies are doing to children. The stories I have heard from parents about their children's school experiences have been even more heartbreaking than those I hear from teachers. The flood of high stakes tests into the

schools of New York State has not only turned instruction into test prep, making once eager youngsters hate going to school, but it has also produced anxiety attacks and stress-related disorders on a massive scale among students as young as 8 years old.

And these stories are not confined to one demographic group. I have heard them from parents in small towns and inner cities, in middle-class urban neighborhoods and suburbs. Children are traumatized by the length of the tests, by the steadily growing difficulty of the material they contain and by the fact that their teachers jobs depend on how well they perform. And God forbid a student or a family should decide not to take the test! In more than few school districts, children who have chosen to opt out have been browbeaten, insulted, threatened with loss of extracurricular activities and access to honors programs, told they will never get into college, told they are jeopardizing their teachers' jobs, told they will be responsible for lowering real estate values in their neighborhood, and, in a few instances, told they are unpatriotic and giving aid and comfort to terrorists!

Given what I have seen and heard last month from the parents of New York State, I respectfully suggest that we, as a nation, need a long period of soul-searching to examine whether the test-driven policies that are being imposed with breakneck speed in public schools are good for children. The two weeks of testing that the children of New York State endured in April comes perilously close reaching abusive proportions. A society that loves and values its children would not accept this as the norm.

Mark Naison is a Professor of African-American Studies and History at Fordham University and Director of Fordham's Urban Studies Program. An earlier version of this article appeared on the author's blog, withbrooklynaccent.blogspot.com. For more about United Opt Out, see unitedoptout.com.



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Will We Learn Anything From the Boston Bombings?

BY WILL TRAVERS

I grew up in Massachusetts — mere minutes away from where the Boston Marathon starts, depending on how fast you drive. Although I live in New York now, my parents are still there and I called my mother on the day of the Boston bombings, April 15, to see how she was. She didn't know anyone in the marathon this year, but nonetheless broke into tears on the phone.

She spoke about how this Patriots' Day had started so well — as a public holiday in the city of Boston, many people had the day off from work and many more had been watching the marathon, in person along the route or at home on TV. For some reason my mother was focusing on the weather before the bombs went off, and although she's usually not one to lack an opinion, in this case all she kept saying was, "It was such a beautiful day..."

I understand how she feels. I understand how something like this can make someone struggle for words to explain — or even process — what's happened. This is the closest anything like this has ever been to her front door.

It was also a beautiful day in another part of the world: Afghanistan's rural Uruzgan province, about a hundred miles northeast of Kandahar. The sun came up there the way it did in Boston, only about eight and a half hours earlier. Instead of a marathon, there was a wedding to be held — two people, two families, and a celebration of the two becoming one. In their lives, there couldn't

have existed a more beautiful day.

U.S. Air Force planes bombed the wedding party that day, killing 30 people and injuring over a hundred. In the words of one of the village residents speaking to the BBC, "There are no Taliban or al Qaeda or Arabs here. These people were all civilians, women, and children." In the jubilation immediately following the wedding ceremony, some of the guests had apparently been firing their weapons into the air. Potentially mistaking the bullets for anti-aircraft artillery fire, the Pentagon admitted, "At least one bomb was errant. We don't know where it fell."

Why am I juxtaposing these two incidents? Is it because they happened on the same day? Well, no. In truth they didn't. The bombing of this particular wedding happened in July 2002. After the bombings in Boston an article about the wedding attack from the UK's *Daily Mail* began circulating on social media, with people insinuating that it had happened on the same day. The byline of that article has since been amended to prominently feature a date, but by not mentioning one earlier I misled the reader, as I myself had been momentarily misled. The truth is, yes, this actually happened; it just happened 11 years ago.

Does that make it any more palatable? Given a moment in which we feel wounded as a nation, the posting of an old story masquerading as something new has the requisite power to shock people into making the connection that needs to be made: namely, between the violence we visit upon people in foreign lands and the violence that comes

back to visit us at home. Violence begets violence, as Martin Luther King began teaching in the 1950s. In an era when important news stories so often get lost amid celebrity pregnancies and partisan inanities, I found it quite refreshing to fall victim to such a minor Internet hoax. Ultimately I couldn't really be all that offended by a story that's actually newsworthy miraculously getting a second life.

In the Boston Marathon bombings, three people died and, to date, over 260 are known to have been injured — some having had limbs blown off in the attack. Initially, speculation was rife about who was responsible. Now that one Tsarnaev brother is dead and the other facing trial, we're beginning to get a picture of how the crime was committed. Just as it became clear who killed the 30 people at that wedding. And fully understanding my complicity in the actions of my government, my heart goes out to everyone who was touched by that violence, in Afghanistan no less than in Boston.

The question for us now is whether or not we'll fall into the same trap we fell into after 9/11. Will we slash civil liberties at home by making scapegoats of innocent people, simply because of their religion or where they happen to have been born? Will we continue inflicting terror abroad, perpetuating the cycle of violence in a misguided attempt to keep our own country safe? Or will we finally be smart enough to say: Okay, we get it now. Living in a place where bombs go off in public is hell. We're sorry, Kabul. We're sorry, Karachi. We're sorry, Baghdad

(where 30-plus people actually were killed in cities across Iraq on the day of the Boston bombings). What's happening where you live is largely our fault, and we promise to do whatever we can to make things better. If you think it will help we'll fund reconstruction efforts, strengthen civil society, and build up the social services that can cut off local support for terrorist organizations. Whatever we do, though, we'll definitely stop bombing you, flying our drones overhead, terrorizing your people, and destabilizing your society. Not because it's wrong, though it most certainly is. And not because it undermines our own supposed goals, though it most certainly does, making our country more, not less, likely to be attacked. But because after Boston, we now have some idea of what it's like.

Will Travers heads the NYC-based band/non-profit Lokashakti, which works to promote peace and social justice through collective action. An earlier version of this article originally appeared at WagingNon-violence.org.



BETH MURPHY

THE STORY BEHIND THE PICTURES

When I left Boston for Afghanistan nearly two months ago, it was with some trepidation — the first I've felt after several filming trips here. Why now? Perhaps because the Afghanistan I'm visiting this spring is not the same country I traveled to in 2001/2002, 2006 and 2009. It has experienced a decade of war, and I've seen firsthand how the outlook has changed among so many — from one of cautious hope for a better future to one of grim acceptance that this last painful, protracted period of violence and political upheaval might still not yield freedom from oppression in this country.

Just days before the April 15 Boston bombings, I woke up to frantic emails and texts from home after the worst insurgent attack in the country in over a decade. I wrote to family and friends, assuring them that I was far from the violence. "Yes, I'm fine. Safe."

The morning after the bombings, when I grabbed my phone off the bedside table, I thought I was re-reading one of my own texts: "We're ok. And everyone we know is safe." But instead it was a message from my husband, Dennis, assuring me that he and our 5-year-old daughter were fine. Boston. Attacked. It was — still is — hard to compre-

hend. Like countless others, I have experienced the pure joy (and pain) of crossing the Boston Marathon finish line, and I felt heartbroken for the victims and for our little city. I also felt a deep sense of longing to be home.

I decided I wanted to send some love from 6500 miles away. Before leaving the house, I made the sign, "To Boston From Kabul With Love" and planned to take one picture of me holding it. But my intent changed as I talked to people here about what had happened. Many had heard the news and I saw the pain on their faces, reminders of their own hardships. They said, "I'm so sorry," with that defining head shake that doesn't need another word of explanation; it says, "I understand."

— Beth Murphy

Beth Murphy is a documentary filmmaker, author, and the founder of the film production company Principle Pictures. She is currently on her fourth trip to Afghanistan, where she is filming What Tomorrow Brings, a documentary about the very first girl's school in a conservative village.

The Democratic Party Eats Itself

BY ERIC LAURSEN

When Barack Obama sent Congress his proposed annual budget on April 10, he became the first Democratic president to advocate cutting Social Security benefits. It was a momentous turning point for the Democratic Party, now controlled by a business and professional elite convinced that to survive as a brand, the party must serve as executioner of the social contract that created that brand to begin with.

But the story actually began earlier this year, when the Obama administration and congressional Democrats agreed to a deal that rescued the vast majority of the Bush tax cuts from imminent expiration and made them permanent. In return, they got a temporary extension of unemployment benefits, a two-month delay of sequestration and extension of child care and tuition tax credits. All quite nice, but small potatoes and nothing that Washington couldn't easily scuttle at some point in the near future.

The Republicans, by contrast, got something of inestimable value, something they had been fighting for a decade to consummate. Crucially, only nine of the 77 members of the House Progressive Caucus voted against the bill, encouraging the White House that it could go further and making clear to voters from working households that their ability to hold their alleged champions in line is fading.

Now, it's happening again, via the president's budget. This time, the deal is for another \$680 billion in revenues over 10 years, to be accomplished by limiting tax breaks. This is calculated to please Washington-Wall Street deficit hawks by raising Obama's 10-year deficit reduction total to \$4.3 trillion. One ingredient is especially troubling — the "chained CPI," a revised Consumer Price Index that would be used to calculate annual cost-of-living adjustments to Social Security, Medicare and other federal programs.

Touted as a mere "technical correction" that would make benefits increases smaller but more accurate, in reality the chained

CPI would begin the transition of Social Security from an earned benefit with broad public support to a welfare-type program that's far more vulnerable to future cuts.

HIGH STAKES

Politically, the stakes are incredibly high. By beginning the process of redefining Social Security downward, the White House is proposing, quite literally, to surrender the Democratic Party's birthright — its stewardship of Social Security, the capstone of

on the benefits it pays for 90% of their income, and even a few hundred dollars less per year — the "modest" reductions touted by the chained CPI's supporters — could result in malnutrition or homelessness.

The chained CPI erodes the principle that Social Security should provide an adequate income for the elderly. From now on, this will be something not to be honored, but finessed — a game that Washington today is all too prepared to play. As Salon.com's Blake Zeff reminds us,

CALLING FOR GREATER SACRIFICE FROM THOSE WHO CAN LEAST AFFORD IT

The first cut to popular, essential programs is always

the most difficult; once it's been done, and that toe is in the water, there's the concern that future reductions could be more easily achieved. That's why the symbolism of a Democratic president attaching his name to — and owning — the cuts is so controversial and worrying for liberals. How hard would it be for Republicans to push future

the New Deal and the foundation of working Americans' party loyalty, or what remains of it.

The president's budget doesn't even prescribe a 50/50 split between spending cuts and tax increases — it's severely skewed toward spending cuts, and would worsen the cumulative effects of the last couple of years of Democratic budget concessions rather than easing them. According to Dean Baker's analysis at the Center for Economic and Policy Research, the hit that the typical retiree would take from the application of the chained CPI would amount to 3 percent of their benefits over time, or some 2 percent of their total income, which is about 70 percent accounted for by Social Security. By contrast, the tax hikes included in the fiscal cliff deal would cost couples making a cushy \$500,000 a year or more only 0.6 percent of their after-tax income.

On balance, then, Obama is calling for a greater sacrifice from those who can least afford it than from those who've spent the last dozen years benefiting from a Bush-era tax-advantage windfall. This is not just unfair, it's playing with human lives. Social Security keeps some 21 million American out of poverty every year, but many of them eke out an existence just this side of destitution. One-third of Social Security recipients rely

OBAMA IS PROPOSING TO SURRENDER THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S BIRTHRIGHT — ITS STEWARDSHIP OF SOCIAL SECURITY, THE CAPSTONE OF THE NEW DEAL AND THE FOUNDATION OF WORKING AMERICANS' PARTY LOYALTY, OR WHAT REMAINS OF IT.

cuts through, when this is now a mainstream Democratic policy?

CHALLENGING THE ELITE

Happily, chances are that Obama's attack on Social Security will go nowhere this year. Congressional Republicans are too savvy to risk their political capital on a comparatively small reduction in the program that could be used against them in the mid-term elections. They also enjoy the sight of Obama going it alone in a reckless attack on his own party's foundations — former Democratic National Committee chair Howard Dean, who was instrumental in building the voter base that put Obama in the presidency in 2008, has mused openly that the White House budget might drive him out of the party.

But Obama has laid down a marker that other elite Democrats will pick up in the not-too-distant future. For those who want to end the three-decade political siege of Social Security and Medicare, expand them to meet the needs of a changing economy, and put government back in the business of breaking down racial, class, wealth, and gender barriers, the challenge isn't to persuade Obama to be more progressive, or even to elect progressive candidates. It's to reverse a long-term trend in government that goes back 40 years and that has proceeded regardless of the party in power.

The creation of Social Security was made possible in the 1930s by the existence of a political left that was actively engaged with the issue of retirement security. The Townsend movement for a guaranteed income for the over-65s, Huey Long's Share Our Wealth movement, not to mention lively communist and socialist movements with grassroots followings, were coming up with their own ideas, making it far easier for Washington to see social insurance for what

it was — a middle-of-the-road response to the demand for some form of collective support against the innate violence of capitalism.

If Social Security is going to be saved from the chained CPI

and any number of other destructive gimmicks, the tool that does the job will not be lawmakers' ability to forge creative compromises, but the power of our imaginations to conceive of something better — something that puts a scare into those lawmakers. As Che Guevara said, "Be reasonable. Demand the impossible." Otherwise, all we'll ever get is another bad deal.

Eric Laursen is author of The People's Pension: The Struggle to Defend Social Security Since Reagan (AK Press). An earlier version of this article originally appeared at firedo-glake.com.

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Shaping the U.S. of the 21st Century

By JUAN GONZÁLEZ

At stake in the immigration reform battle is what America will look like in the 21st century. It will decide who is in the country legitimately, and who will be legitimately allowed to come into the country over the next several decades.

It's not the first kind of battle of its kind. The most recent immigration reform bill, passed in 1986, wasn't fully comprehensive. And before that, there were huge immigration battles in the 1960s, in the 1920s and even further back in the 1880s.

The devil is always in the details when it comes to legislation. The bipartisan group working on the Senate bill — dubbed the “Gang of Eight” and comprising Democratic Senators Michael Bennet, Dick Durbin, Robert Menendez and Chuck Schumer, and as well as Republicans Jeff Flake, Lindsey Graham, John McCain and Marco Rubio — released their proposal on April 17. But no matter what we know so far about the proposal of the Gang of Eight, there will be a separate bill adopted in the House of Representatives. It will undoubtedly be far weaker than what the Gang of Eight came up with in the Senate, and those bills will then have to be reconciled and then signed into law by the president.

This is only the beginning of what will be a long process that will go on through the spring and summer and probably into the fall. What we now know about this so-called Senate compromise bill is that it's going to be heavy on border security. It will delay the process by which those who are undocumented in the country will be able to establish their legal status, and even citizenship, a minimum of 10 years. So in the first 10 years, there will be beefed-up border security, more requirements and more spending by the government, which already spends an already enormous sum — \$17.9

billion was spent last year alone — on border security in the United States. And according to Congress, the border will have to be 100 percent under surveillance, and there will have to be triggers before anyone can then be moved onto permanent residency status — not citizenship.

Why are they holding that up by 10 years? The real reason is that Democrats and some of the proponents of immigration reform don't want the cost — for instance, of health insurance for those undocumented im-

migrants who gain permanent residency status — to scuttle whatever legislation comes forward. One of the things they don't want to admit is that because Congress only projects 10-year budgets, delaying for 10 years will temporarily bury any costs associated with immigration reform. That's why they're willing to accept an inordinately long period for the undocumented to become even permanent residents.

Then, there's the question of when they will actually become citizens. The other dark secret about immigration reform is that two-thirds of all the undocumented in the United States come from one country: Mexico. It's been suggested that people go to the back of the line, but there are currently people in Mexico who have been waiting 20 years to be admitted into the country. It's the longest line in the world. Two-thirds of the undocumented would have to get to the back of a 20-year line to be admitted into the United States, and many undocumented Mexican immigrants may be waiting 25 or 30 years, unless the government also increases the country caps for countries that have the longest lines.

The other complex issue that's going to be in this bill is that of who gets to come into the country in the future and how. There will be three provisions for labor flow. One will be for farm workers and another will be for other unskilled workers, such as hotel and service workers. And then there will be a provision for those who come in with professional technical skills under what are called the H-1B visas. Each of these will have sharp increases in the number of people admitted.

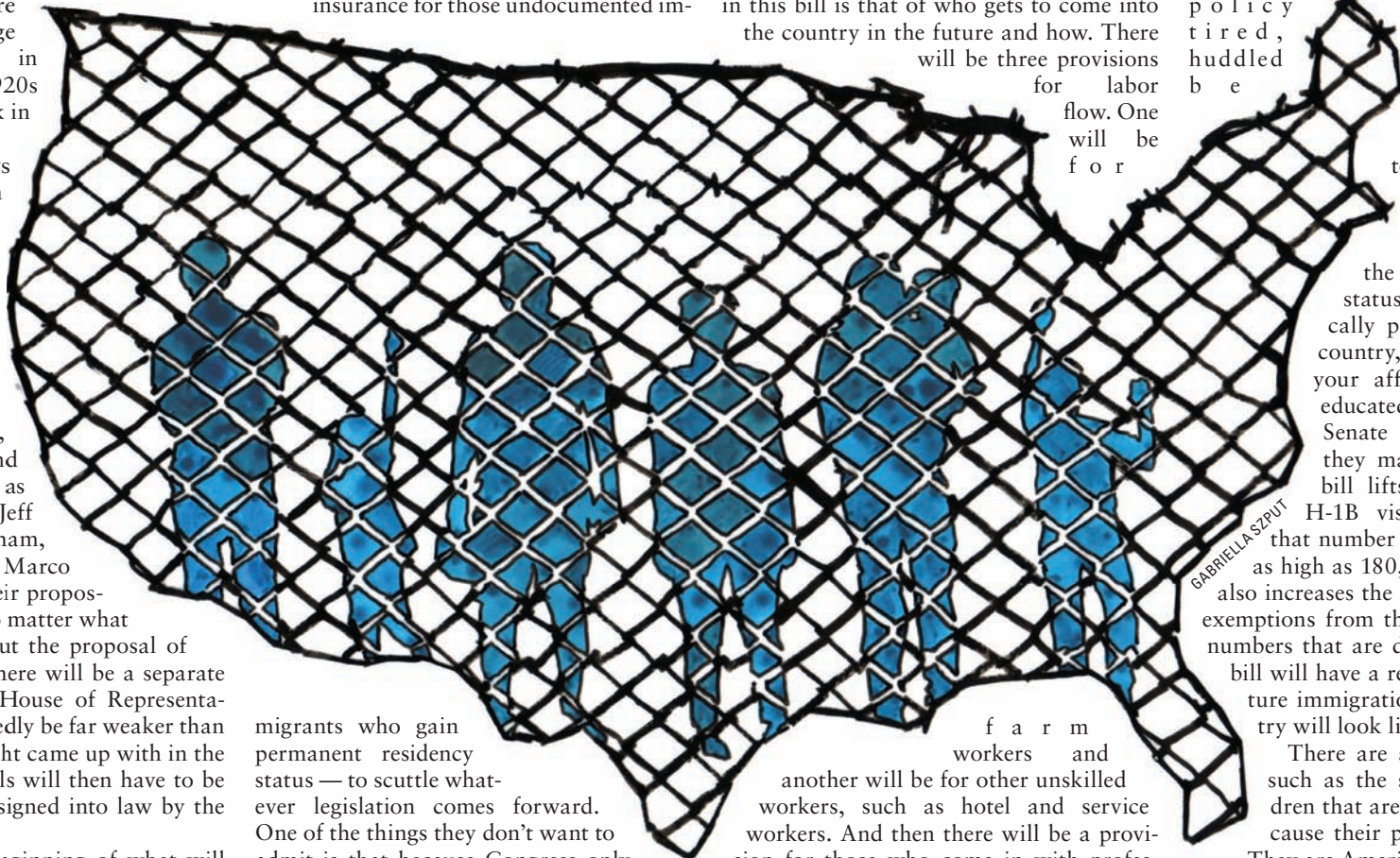
As many as 200,000 people will be admitted in the low-skill categories and sponsored by their employers. But then the question becomes: If you're sponsored by an employer, do you have portability? In other words, if you come in sponsored by one employer, do you have to stay with that employer in order to stay in the country, or can you move your visa from one employer to another? What kind of job protections will you have? What kind of minimum wages will you be subjected to? The same thing will apply for the farm workers.

Right now there are about 85,000 people allowed into the country every year under professional, skilled or scientific visas, the H-1B workers. The business community and Silicon Valley want to eliminate all caps on these visas and bring in as many highly educated people as possible. They want to change American immigration policy from “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free,” to “Give me your well-educated, those who can afford to pay either to come to a graduate school in the United States to get a quick visa into the country for permanent status or who can just basically pay their way into the country,” and so, “Give me your affluent and your well-educated.” If the proposed Senate bill is any indication, they may get their wish: the bill lifts the current cap on H-1B visas to 110,000, and that number is permitted to rise to as high as 180,000 in future years; it also increases the number of STEM field exemptions from the cap to 25,000. The numbers that are decided on in the final bill will have a real impact on what future immigration flow into the country will look like.

There are also small side issues, such as the several thousand children that are now in foster care because their parents were deported. They are American citizens. When the final bill is signed, will their parents be allowed to come back into the country to reunite with them?

This immigration bill is not only about undocumented immigrants, but also about these other questions. The bill that's ultimately passed into law will determine the future composition of the United States in the 21st century.

This article was adapted from an April 11 appearance by the author on Democracy Now (democracynow.org).



FEAR OF THE FOREIGNER

The United States is a nation of immigrants, but federal immigration laws have frequently been marked by a deep ambivalence toward newer arrivals.

1882 - THE IMMIGRATION ACT - The first comprehensive federal immigration law called for the return of convicts, “idiots,” “lunatics” and persons unable to care for themselves to their countries of origin. The new federal system was funded by a tax of fifty cents on each immigrant. In the same year, Congress approved the Chinese Exclusion Act, which effectively ended Chinese immigration to the United States for 80 years.

1891 - THE IMMIGRATION ACT - The 1891 Immigration Act amended the 1882 act to also exclude immigrants considered to be polygamists, to have contagious diseases, and those “likely to become a public charge.” It also called for the deportation of any immigrants who fit these categories within one year of their entry. A congressional report at the time concluded that “at least 50 percent of the criminals, insane and paupers of our largest cities ... are of foreign birth.”

1917 - IMMIGRATION ACT - This law introduced for the first time

a post-entry criminal conduct basis for deportation. It called for otherwise legal residents to be deported if they committed “a crime involving moral turpitude” within five years of their arrival. The Supreme Court upheld this language in 1951, ruling that it is not “void for vagueness” and it remains in use.

1921 - EMERGENCY QUOTA ACT - This was the first immigration law that established a quota system based on nationality. It limited immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 3 percent of the number of persons from that country living in the United States based on the 1910 census.

1952 - THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT - Passed at the height of the McCarthy Era, this measure organized immigration statutes under one section of law, and included harsh provisions that limited judicial review of deportation cases and eliminated many statutes of limitation for deportation. It was co-authored by Rep. Francis Walter, who argued that “thousands of criminals and subversive aliens are roaming our streets, a continuing threat to the safety of our people.” The House and Senate passed the bill overwhelmingly, but President Truman vetoed it as “unnecessarily severe.” His veto was overridden.

1965 - THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT - This mea-

sure signed into law by President Johnson abolished the old quota system for immigrants, but put in place a new quota of 120,000 for the Western Hemisphere. The new system generated a backlog of immigrants from Latin America that continues to this day.

1986 - IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT - This act created a requirement for employers to verify whether employees are authorized to work in the United States, and “legalized” almost 3 million people. In order to be eligible for amnesty, undocumented immigrants first had to turn themselves in for deportation proceedings.

1996 - ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION REFORM AND IMMIGRANT RESPONSIBILITY ACT - President Clinton signed into law the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). The new rules retroactively expanded the criminal grounds for deportation, created mandatory detention for many immigrants, and authorized more state and local law enforcement participation in immigration enforcement.

Adapted from “Deportation Nation: A Timeline Of Immigrant Criminalization” by Renée Feltz and Stokely Baksh, Deportation-Nation.org.

Dreaming Out Loud

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY MICHAEL GOULD-WARTOFSKY

The New York State Youth Leadership Council is an organization of, by and for undocumented youth. Like their counterparts in other states, its members have broken through the fear that has gripped immigrant communities in recent years by “coming out” in public as “undocumented and unafraid.” In the process, they have wrought a movement that has helped put immigration reform back on the map and forced both major parties to express support for the DREAM Act — federal legislation that would make it easier for undocumented youth, known as “Dreamers,” to attend college and earn a path to citizenship. During March, the YLC celebrated its fourth annual “Coming Out of the Shadows Month.” NYC events included a series of “UndocuMics,” writing workshops, and a Coming Out Rally (see photos below) in Union Square on March 28.

DIANA EUSEBIO

Diana Eusebio came to this country when she was six, along with her two older brothers and her father, soon after the death of her mother in Mexico. She grew up in Florida, until Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and its Secure Communities program tore her family apart: “My brother was stopped in Florida for driving without a license. And, because of Secure Communities, he was sent to an ICE immigration facility, and he was deported.”

After her brother’s deportation, Diana moved to New York, where she enrolled in the Hostos Lincoln Academy of Science in the Bronx and quickly joined the undocumented student movement. Diana cites her older brother as her inspiration for coming out, telling her story and sharing her struggles as an undocumented immigrant. “He didn’t have the chance to come out to tell his story,” she says, so “I am the one advocating for my family. I am telling my story, their story, our story, because he didn’t have the chance to.”



LEYDI BAUTISTA LA VOZ

Leydi Bautista La Voz left her hometown in the state of Puebla, Mexico when she was eight. “I am proud of my roots, no matter what,” she says. Together with her mother and two brothers, she came to this country without papers. From her very first day at school, she felt she was targeted for being an immigrant. “It was very painful. I knew I didn’t belong here.” But Leydi, now 20 and a mother of two, has not let her undocumented status keep her back. Alongside the New York State Youth Leadership Council, she also works with the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health. Pointing to her two young boys, Josue and Henry, Leydi insists, “They are the reason I want to say, ‘It’s enough. It’s time.’ I deserve to have the right to go to college so I can give a better future to them. Yes, I am a young mom, but that doesn’t make me garbage. I am worth it.”



NERIEL DAVID PONCÉ

Neriel David Poncé immigrated to this country from the Philippines when he was only 5 years old. “My family came here, they worked their asses off,” he recounts, adding, “I don’t want to see them go.” Neriel (pictured right, holding sign) didn’t learn about his own legal status until it came time to apply for college. He speaks of “the heartbreaking moment” for students like him, “when they find out they don’t have any means to pay for college, or any help from the government.”

Neriel is now in his senior year of high school. He hopes to continue his studies, and has been accepted to SUNY, CUNY, and private schools alike — but, he says, “I can’t afford any of this.” In spite of his personal struggles, Neriel aspires to be “a voice to others out there. To reach out to them. To find hope, and to fight for this cause.” To this end, he has helped organize a group called Revolutionizing Asian-American Immigrant Stories on the East Coast (or RAISE), a youth-led group that aims to empower undocumented Asian students “to share their struggles and find a voice amid the culture of silence.” What we need now, he says, is “for the students to be heard.”



PERCY LUJAN

Percy Lujan arrived in the US at the age of 11, along with his family, in search of “better economic opportunities” than they had found in the wake of the U.S-backed dictatorship in Peru. “I knew from the get-go that I was undocumented,” he remembers. Unlike most undocumented youth in New York, however, Percy was eventually able to win a full scholarship to Lehman College, in the Bronx. “Most of the smart people that we see in college are very lucky,” he says. “Many of the smart people we know are working...as dishwashers or busboys...as housekeepers or babysitters.”

When Percy got to Lehman, he helped found a campus group that advocates for undocumented students, as he came to realize that “rights are not granted to us... We have to fight for them.” He vows to continue this fight once he gets

legal status: “I don’t think my struggles are unique...I think they are part of a bigger movement for justice. I won’t stop until everyone has liberty and justice.”

For more about the New York State Youth Leadership Council, see www.nysylc.org.

FIGHTING FOR A PLACE TO CALL HOME

NYC IMMIGRANT RIGHTS STRUGGLES SINCE 9/11

Text by Michael Gould-Wartofsky
Graphic by Mikael Tarkela



In the weeks and months following 9/11, the city's Arab, Muslim and South Asian communities find themselves under siege from all sides: from federal authorities to local law enforcement, and from employers to landlords to racist vigilantes. At the federal level, over 1,200 Arab, Muslim and South Asian New Yorkers are targeted for "special interest" roundups and secret detentions, many of them held for months without charge. Immigrants and their allies organize in defense of their civil rights, with educational campaigns, legal advocacy efforts, volunteer escorts and solidarity actions at Immigration and Naturalization Service offices and detention centers.



In October 2002, thousands of young men from 25 primarily Muslim countries are subjected to "special registrations," at which they are interrogated about their politics, finances and immigration status. Over 3,000 New Yorkers are deported under the program from 2002-3. Meanwhile, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 leads to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, with the newly minted Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as its "principal investigative arm." By 2004, ICE apprehensions reached 1 million immigrants annually, and more than 200,000 were placed in detention centers. The offensive is met with widespread resistance in NYC. Families for Freedom, among others, is founded as a "multi-ethnic defense network by and for immigrants facing and fighting deportation."



Immigrant New Yorkers are at the forefront of a growing anti-detention movement, which helps put a stop to the special registrations in 2003. Amid preparations for the invasion of Iraq, the Department of Homeland Security announces Operation Liberty Shield, authorizing the detention of asylum seekers and the interrogation of immigrants from Iraq and 20 other nations. Meanwhile, in City Hall, Mayor Michael Bloomberg signs Executive Order 34, giving the NYPD and the Department of Corrections the power to investigate the immigration status of any New Yorker and to disclose their immigration status to ICE. Facing massive opposition, the mayor is forced to revise the order later that year but leaves many of its most harmful provisions in place.

Immigrant labor takes the lead in organizing drives and issue campaigns across the city and state. Domestic Workers United wins the first ever Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, mandating basic labor protections for this largely immigrant workforce in NYC. The Restaurant Opportunities Center organizes non-unionized restaurant workers and wins back millions of dollars in unpaid wages. The NY Immigration Coalition helps launch the Campaign to End Wage Theft and the \$5.15 Is Not Enough Campaign, which pressures lawmakers to raise the state's minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.15. The local immigrant rights movement also partners with the AFL-CIO to bring tens of thousands out to the Immigrant Worker Freedom Rides in Queens, and tens of thousands more to march for immigrant and labor rights at the Republican National Convention.

Anti-immigrant violence continues to escalate in the Greater New York region. The escalation mirrors a national trend, with anti-Latino hate crimes rising 40 percent from 2003 to 2006. The violence is increasingly directed at Mexican and Central American immigrants, amid racist rhetoric and incitement from above. Suffolk County, NY is ground zero for the nativist offensive. Day laborers are harassed and beaten, a family of five is firebombed in its home, and groups like Sachem Quality of Life wage a campaign of terror in and around Farmingville, NY. Local initiatives like the Workplace Project and the Long Island Immigrant Alliance push back, fighting racial profiling, educating native-born neighbors and opening centers for day laborers.



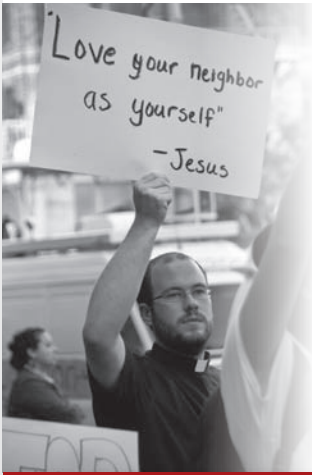
On March 25, immigrants and their allies stage a million-strong march in the streets of Los Angeles to protest the criminalization of the undocumented. On April 10, tens of thousands of New Yorkers converge on City Hall Park as part of a National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice. Then, on May 1 — International Workers' Day — immigrant workers lead a wave of wildcat strikes and *megamarchas*, pouring into the streets of over 70 cities in an unprecedented show of force known as "A Day Without an Immigrant." In NYC, hundreds of thousands of immigrants and their supporters march from Union Square to Foley Square, filling no less than 26 blocks along Broadway, and chanting "*El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido*." Hundreds of businesses throughout the city, especially in Brooklyn and Queens, are shuttered for the day.



The anti-immigrant right rallies around the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (H.R. 4437), with its battle cry of "border security" and its call for the criminalization of all 11 million undocumented immigrants as well as those who come to their aid. Some immigrant rights advocates ally with business interests and rally around the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act (S. 1033), known as the McCain-Kennedy bill, which includes a path to legalization but also a path to further criminalization and an expansion of the guestworker labor regime. Many immigrant activists and advocates oppose both bills, fearing that they will only serve to legalize the status quo of exclusion and exploitation. Both bills ultimately go down in defeat amid an escalating wave of raids, detentions and deportations.



The New York State Youth Leadership Council is founded by and for undocumented youth to demand equal access to higher education, including in-state tuition and tuition assistance for those who cannot otherwise afford to go to college. Youth have been organizing around the issue since 2001, but the founding of the YLC marks a new chapter in the history of the movement. Beginning in 2007, the DREAM Act advances at the federal and state levels, with the promise that it will make college affordable and offer a path to citizenship to the "Dreamers." But the effort is blocked by the nativist bloc in the Senate. In 2009, Dreamers from coast to coast come together to form United We Dream, aimed at "building a movement that would not hinge on votes in Congress," but on youth empowerment and youth-led mobilization at the grassroots.



As unemployment soars due to the Great Recession, immigrants across the region and country again find themselves scapegoated for the troubles of their native-born neighbors. The backlash yields a bill in Suffolk County imposing sanctions for immigrant hires, an initiative to turn local police into immigration agents in the Hudson Valley, and SB 1070 in Arizona, a law making it a crime to be without papers. New Yorkers turn out in force to reject the new laws and lend their support to the "Alto Arizona" (Stop Arizona) boycott.



Undocumented students and their allies continue to push for passage of the DREAM Act and a national moratorium on deportations. In the spring of 2010, Dreamers stage a wave of sit-ins, hunger strikes and other actions in and around Congressional offices, including that of NY Senator Chuck Schumer. Over 100 allies are arrested in three weeks of civil disobedience at Manhattan's Federal Plaza. Yet the lawmakers remain intransigent. After two years of increasingly confrontational protests, President Obama blinks. In June 2012, the White House announces a "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals" (DACA) policy, allowing Dreamers to stay in the United States and apply for work permits. While DACA brings a measure of relief to tens of thousands in NYC, it fails to stem the tide of deportations for the rest of the undocumented.



Newly elected President Barack Obama, in spite of campaign promises to change course, continues and even accelerates deportations over the course of his first term. Each passing year marks a new record, with close to 400,000 removal proceedings recorded annually. ICE activity in New York City alone jumped 60 percent since 2006, according to Families for Freedom, with close to 30,000 New Yorkers detained since 2008 and 92 percent of them deported. Police precincts and city jails increasingly serve as direct pipelines to detention and deportation. And in 2012, in spite of local opposition, the Secure Communities (S-Comm) program goes into effect in NYC. Under S-Comm, all law enforcement is linked to immigration enforcement and local police are required to send any and all fingerprints immediately to Department of Homeland Security databases.



Immigrant and international activists play a formative role in the organization of Occupy Wall Street, with occupiers from almost every continent bringing their struggles to the table. Early on, immigrant-led unions such as TWU Local 100 are among the first to join the fray. Within days, community organizations, worker centers and allied groups around the city, from El Barrio to Sunset Park, join together to form the Immigrant Worker Justice Working Group. Declaring, "Immigrants Are the 99%," they go on to launch two parallel campaigns, one targeting for-profit detention centers, the other businesses engaged in wage theft. Long after their eviction from Zuccotti, immigrants continue to play a critical role in the movement as a whole, from May Day marches to rent strikes to organizing drives at local eateries and car washes.



The Senate's "Gang of Eight" unveils yet another "bipartisan framework" for comprehensive immigration reform, claiming to offer a new "roadmap" to address the status of undocumented immigrants. Many immigrants are quick to question this roadmap. Its path to citizenship not only takes 13 years and thousands of dollars in fines and fees, but is also "contingent upon our success in securing our borders," as well as an "E-Verify" system and a guestworker regime. The House, for its part, promises even harsher legislation. Advocacy groups call on their base to "fight to protect the good things" and to "fight to get rid of the bad." On April 10, over 3,000 New Yorkers board buses to Washington, D.C. to do just that.

On April 15, a pair of bombs go off at the Boston Marathon, killing three and injuring over 260. Two legal immigrants of Chechen heritage are later implicated. Yet, long before the suspects' identities are revealed, a new wave of racial violence ensues, stoked by speculation that the bombers are "dark-skinned males." Abdullah Faruque, a New Yorker born in Bangladesh, is brutalized in the Bronx. The backlash following the bombing revives calls for the mass detention of Muslims and threatens to derail efforts to win immigrant rights.

Culture Clash

CONFRONTING NATIVISTS IN THE JERSEY SUBURBS

BY MARTY KIRCHNER

BERGENFIELD, New Jersey — Raynaldo gets up every morning at 6:00 a.m. to catch a bus going 12 miles from West New York, N.J. to an alleyway behind a police station on the edge of Bergenfield. By 7:30 a.m. he finds himself alongside other recent immigrants from Guatemala and Mexico hoping a construction contractor, homeowner, or small business owner will drive up and offer a job for the day. Work has been hard to find since the collapse of the housing market in 2007. But the United Patriots of America have not.

Every Saturday morning for the past seven years, the UPA — which models itself after the Arizona-based Minuteman Project — has been holding rallies in Dumont, a neighboring borough just across the street from the hiring site where Raynaldo and others gather. As many as 15 UPA members regularly assemble at these rallies. They wave U.S. and Arizona flags, carry signs that scapegoat immigrants for the country's economic crisis and record video of immigrants seeking work and the employers who hire them. Local police regularly drive through the area and issue tickets to any day laborers found standing outside the city-designated hiring site.

"I don't like the protesters because they always see us as not producing value, but we produce a lot of value for this country economically," says Raynaldo. "If there were no day laborers, or no immigrants then the county's economy would go down."

"The image I have is of what America looked like in the 1960s in the South," added Jean Gratien, an immigrant from Rwanda who volunteers with a group that provides English lessons, coffee and sandwiches to the day laborers.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Bergenfield is a suburb of 26,000 people located ten miles outside New York City. Whites are a slim majority of the borough's residents. Rapidly growing Asian and Hispanic populations have helped reverse decades of population decline in Bergenfield and the surrounding area while stoking the concerns of some locals about Bergen County's changing complexion.

"You have a lot of the population that is really aging," explains Bonnie Strain, a resident in Dumont. "A lot of these workers — the ones I spoke to the other day — are busy doing additions, updating in people's houses."

The tense stand-off that has been unfolding on the edge of Bergenfield for much of the past decade is emblematic of national trends that have made smaller communities like this one central to the struggle over the future of the United States' 11 million undocumented immigrants.

Since the 1990s, new immigrants, often following jobs in construction and the food industry, have been settling in growing numbers in suburban cities and rural towns, as well as across the South and Southwest. The effect was jarring for many whites who were accustomed to living alongside people who looked and spoke like they did.

When longtime anti-immigrant groups like the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) used the post-9/11 backlash against foreigners to launch attacks

on immigrants, their nativist rhetoric fell on fertile ground. In late 2005, House Republicans pushed legislation, known as the Sensenbrenner Bill, that would have made it a felony — as opposed to a civil violation — to reside in the U.S. as an undocumented immigrant or to hire or assist one. The draconian measure sparked a massive response from immigrant communities across the nation. In the spring of 2006, a rolling series of protests that culminated on May Day saw an estimated 3 to 5 million people take to the streets in over 160 cities and towns in the largest series of mass demonstrations in U.S. history.

NATIVISM GOES LOCAL

The Sensenbrenner Bill was dropped, but the mass mobilizations of 2006 soon turned out to be a high water mark for the immigrant rights movement. A surge in military-style workplace and predawn home raids conducted under the aegis of the Department of Homeland Security drove many undocumented immigrants back into the shadows.

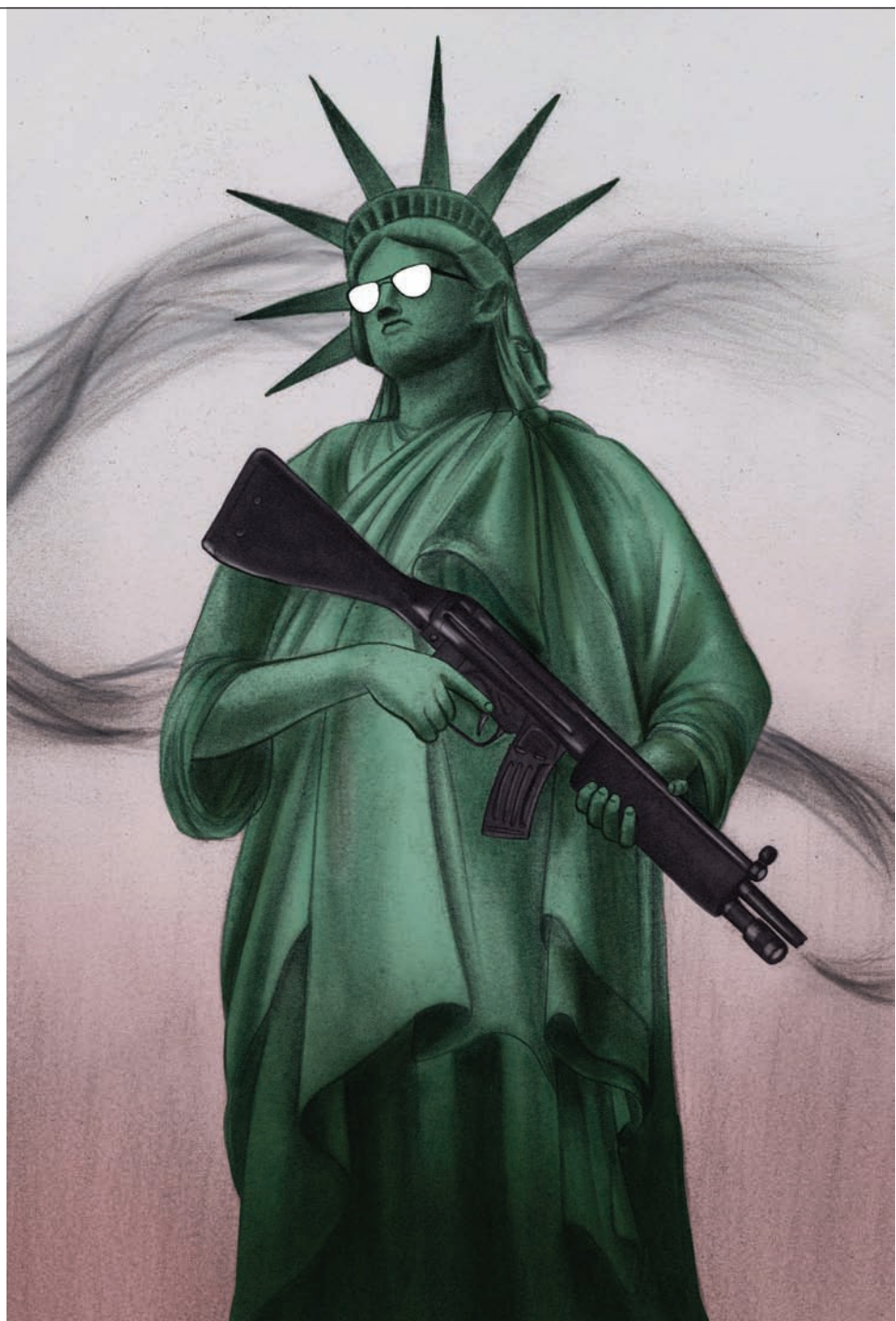
As author Juan González writes in *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*, it was "the most extensive government campaign of roundups and deportations since the days of Operation Wetback [in the 1950s]. Nearly 900,000 people were deported by ICE from 2006 to 2008 — nearly three times the number removed from 2001 to 2003."

Following the defeat of the Sensenbrenner Bill in 2006, and with the onset of the Great Recession, conservative towns and cities throughout the country — with the support of the Bush administration — began to activate 287(g), a program that trains and deputizes local police officers to act as immigration agents and create an immigration dragnet. Later, the Obama administration would implement a 50-state roll out of Secure Communities, a program that relies on biometric identification technology that allows local police to check the fingerprints of arrested persons against FBI and Homeland Security databases.

Other localities pushed further. Just weeks after the 2006 May Day protests, anti-immigrant activists in San Bernardino, California, a suburb outside of Los Angeles, began a petition drive calling for a city ordinance to restrict the employment and housing options of undocumented immigrants. With help from FAIR, similarly worded ordinances began appearing in places like Hazelton, Pennsylvania, Valley Park, Missouri, Farmers Branch, Texas and Riverside, New Jersey — obscure towns and suburban cities with conservative local governments that had experienced sharp increases of new immigrants over the previous two decades.

In the same way that angry whites initiated local battles against mandatory school busing in the 1970s that provided fodder for a larger post-civil rights era backlash, this wave of local anti-immigrant initiatives had an outsized impact as Washington-based politicians raced to stay ahead of public support for stricter, more punitive policies.

Meanwhile, in Bogota, New Jersey, five miles south of Bergenfield, conservative mayor Steve Lonegan hosted a town hall meeting at the height of the 2006 marches that featured speakers from UPA, New Jersey Citizens for Immigration Control, and a national official from FAIR. A petition drive



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in Bergenfield calling for a citywide vote on 287(g) subsequently failed to gain enough signatures. But in 2007, the New Jersey Attorney General issued a directive saying that local law enforcement should inquire about a person's immigration status upon arrest for a serious crime. The UPA's weekly effort to intimidate day laborers in Bergenfield that began shortly after the 2006 mass protests continues to this day. But it is something of an outlier now compared to 2010, when the extreme nativist movement saw its peak with 319 similar groups active around the country.

Since then, says Heidi Beirich of the Southern Poverty Law Center, "most of the energy that once animated the anti-immigrant movement... moved into the political mainstream, where Republicans and Tea Partiers have competed with one another to craft ever-harsher nativist laws." These state and local laws and federal enforcement programs have defined immigration policy for the country. They shape the terms of the current debate over immigration reform in Congress.

"I think it is important to recognize that protests and attacks on day laborers and the attempts, both legislative and grassroots, to limit their access to paying jobs is part of a larger effort to limit the ability for all immigrants, both documented and undocumented, to seek work," says Aaron Flanagan of the Center for New Community. "It is a material manifestation of the doctrine of self-deportation, or attrition through enforcement."

SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

In 2007, a coalition of anti-racist, pro-immigrant and socialist groups from New Jersey and New York began to hold counter-protests against the UPA. At the time, spirited rallies of as many as 100 people took place.

"When there are organizations that want to defend the rights of immigrants it gives me a great feeling that we are not alone, that there are people who are not racist, who are on our side. It is a great motivation to continue and persevere," says Raynaldo.

Unfortunately, the momentum to support the day laborers has waned over the years while the UPA has continued its weekly protests. On March 2, nine members of the Independent Workers' Movement, a New York City-based network of day laborers, domestic workers and street vendors, joined over 30 day laborers in Bergenfield in a lively protest against the continued presence of UPA.

Such events bolster the morale of embattled day laborers. They also send a message to area residents that immigrant bashing is misguided and not worthy of their support, which is why these kinds of visible solidarity actions need to become much more common. Day laborers in Bergenfield have also begun meeting with IWM and are organizing to finally end the harassment they face from UPA.

The counter-mobilization against immigrant rights feeds off fear and ignorance and is centered in state and local areas outside of urban strongholds like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. This often unfamiliar terrain, the home turf of anti-immigrant forces, is where immigrant rights supporters need to be going on the offensive and contesting right-wing narratives. Only by changing hearts and minds at the grassroots level and isolating far-right nativists can we begin to shift the political establishment's fixation away from punishment and toward a more humane approach to immigration reform.

Marty Kirchner is a member of the Independent Workers' Movement.

A DAY LABORER SAYS, 'We Deserve the Chance to Become Full Members of the Society We Contribute to Every Day'

BY ROBERTO MENESES

I am an undocumented day laborer in Queens who has worked in this country for almost 20 years. I do hard, dangerous jobs on construction sites such as demolition or carrying out the trash, when I can get any work at all. I have known many men who have been killed in workplace accidents or who have become gravely ill from breathing in dust due to a lack of adequate protective equipment.

We deserve the chance to become full members of the society we contribute to every day. For the past decade, I have heard much in the media about a possible immigration reform law. But, I have learned not to believe it.

In the early 2000s, there was talk of the United States and Mexico reaching a comprehensive deal to legalize all undocumented immigrants in return for a free trade deal that would allow private investment in Pemex, Mexico's state-owned oil company. Those talks fell apart after 9/11.

During his 2004 re-election campaign, President George W. Bush once again raised hopes of immigration reform to woo the Latino vote, but it was an empty promise.

In 2006, we went out into the streets by the millions and our demands continued to be ignored.

President Barack Obama won the Hispanic vote in 2008 by promising that in his first 100 days as president, he would put forth comprehensive immigration reform. Once in office, he said he was too busy dealing with the economic crisis to work on immigration reform.

Today, in Obama's second term as President, we hear the same promise of humane and comprehensive immigration reform.

But, I don't see it. As far as I can tell from what is being discussed, we are being asked to accept a process toward legalization that would take 10 to 15 years. The only thing being offered is a simple guest worker permit similar to what we already have with the H-2A and H-2B visas.

MORE EXPLOITATION

Far from being a solution, work permits are

instruments of exploitation for immigrant workers on both sides of the border. In immigrants' countries of origin, unscrupulous brokers collect large fees promising to help arrange work permits and then disappear with people's money. On this side of the border, the bosses expose the workers to long hard hours of labor in unhealthy conditions and without necessary protections. If the workers don't like it, they can lose their jobs and their work permits.

Creating a new set of work permits without a real path to permanent residency and citizenship will only legalize the exploitation we live under while requiring us to go to "the back of the line" and pay thousands of dollars in fines and more taxes for the privilege of being treated this way.

The Senate's bipartisan "Gang of Eight" (which includes New York Senator Chuck Schumer) may think they are fooling us. But, I can't swallow this deception. And I suspect there are many others like me among the

11 million undocumented people in this country who understand what is being proposed and will have no motivation to come "out of the shadows" to participate in this process.

The distrust that I feel comes from observing two successive presidential administrations, one Republican and the other Democrat. They speak from both sides of their mouth. From one side they spew words of legalization, but on the other side they generate more anti-immigration laws, increase deportations, build detention centers and jails, and pour more investments into the policing the border.

I am over 45 years old, as are many of the people I work with in construction. And it appears increasingly likely that we will not live long enough to be legalized. This is unjust. After almost two decades in this country, there are a couple of things I have learned: Firstly, don't trust the politicians, and secondly, it will only be through our own ability to organize and collectively fight for our rights that we will see improvements in our lives.

Roberto Meneses is the president of Day Laborers United (Jornaleros Unidos). Translation by Gustavo Medina.

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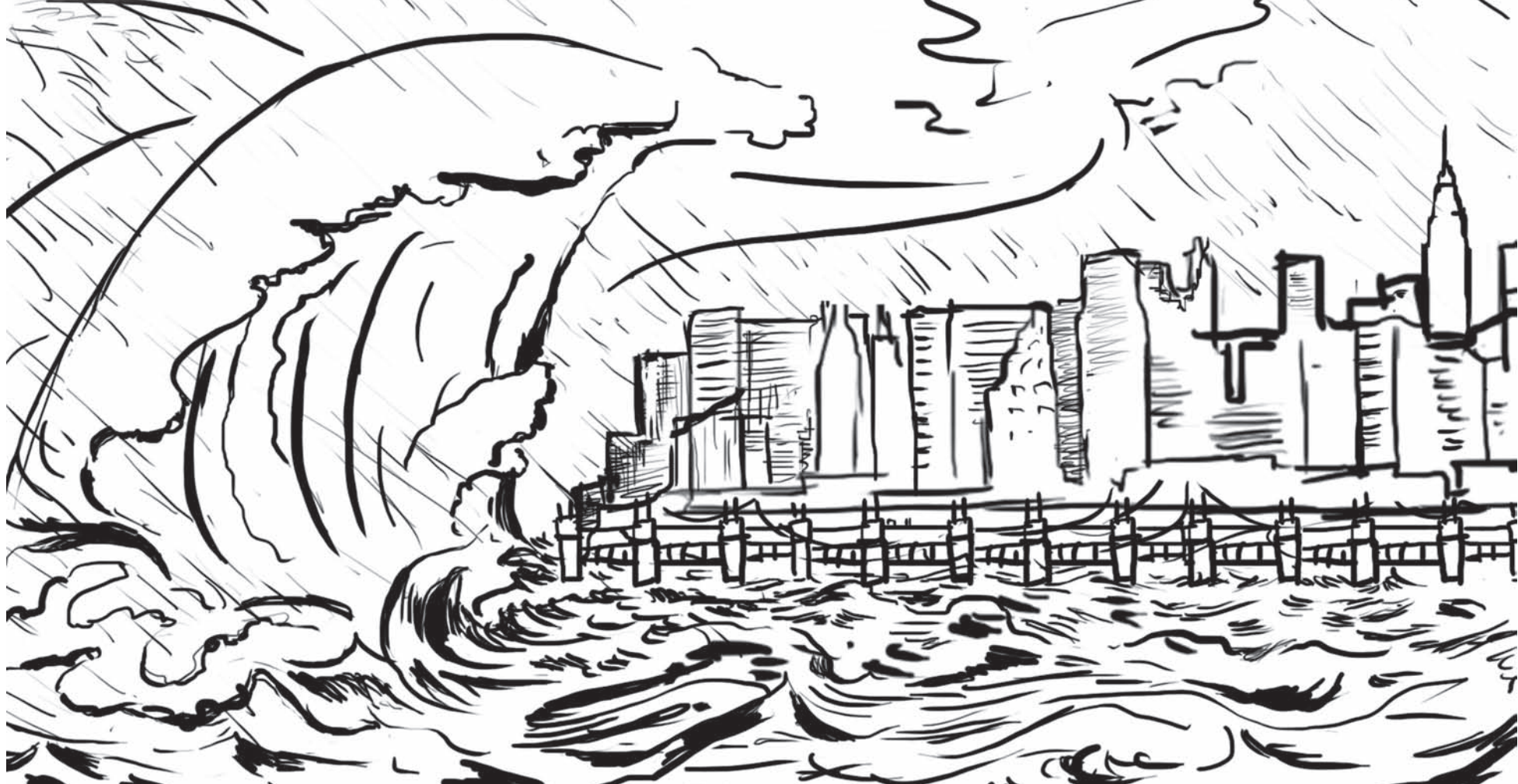
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The Storm

BY NICHOLAS POWERS



ELKE SKIK

IT'S 2037 — A QUARTER CENTURY AFTER HURRICANE SANDY. NEW YORK CITY IS BATTERED BY STORMS AND RIVEN BY SOCIAL CONFLICT AS A POWERFUL BUT FLAWED MASS MOVEMENT SEARCHES FOR SOLUTIONS TO A CLIMATE CRISIS IT DID NOT CREATE.

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD," they yelled and raised their hands as the music reached into their bodies, driving them with the fear and rage they felt since hearing about the storm. Muhammad saw couples grope and kiss, break apart and latch limbs with new partners. A man thrust a bottle of rum to his mouth and Muhammad gulped the liquor that hit his gut like a sunrise.

"Happy End of the World buddy," he hollered. Muhammad gave him a wobbly salute, stepped out of the dancing and picked up the scattered flyers on the ground. Walking away from the street party, he read the pamphlets that repeated the headline on every news site — SUPERSTORM TO HIT CITY. More flyers like the white footprints of a ghost, led to the far side of Tompkins Square Park, where a loud rally shook the air.

People quickly crisscrossed the park. Families pushed food-heavy shopping carts as kids aimed flashlights at each other and laughed. On the street, cars inched forward, stopped, honked at the car in front and inched ahead again. Drivers got out and argued. A glinting river of vehicles, loaded with suitcases hummed in an long line.

Muhammad watched them, knowing that the police were closing the bridges after tomorrow night and whoever could get out

was getting out. But those who didn't have cars or had to stay and work, like himself, were being left to defend the city. And if the city survived these same people would come back like worms.

He swigged more rum and walked to the rally. Over the crowd, a large booming voice shot vivid images into the air. Muhammad stood on his toes and saw Loli, spokeswoman for the Free Earth Movement on stage, dressed in all black with the tell-tale green armband. "Look at them run," she shouted and pointed at the cars. Everyone turned and stared at the drivers. "The middle class and wealthy are leaving. But we who run this city, we who made this city — we stay. And you know what I say?"

The crowd yelled for her to say. Muhammad eyed them, took another swig. "They created this storm! They created this economy! They created climate chaos! They are killing the planet and they are the ones killing us," she yelled, "We have to cut them out of our lives, cut them out of history!" She crossed her arms above her head, "What time is it?"

Everyone crossed their arms above their heads as if brandishing a thousand pairs of scissors. "Time to cut, cut, cut..." they yelled. Muhammad raised his arms, crossed them and made a cutting motion

and yelled with them.

CITY ON EDGE

The street was a like a shaken beehive. People buzzed in front of stoops, handing planks of wood to board up windows, spools of duct tape and red jugs of gasoline. Members of the Free Earth Movement fanned out across the sidewalk, walkie-talkies crackled on hip belts as they handed out directions to emergency shelters.

Muhammad felt like he was floating through an old-school 20th-century disaster movie. He had studied them in a college film class, laughing in the back with his friends at how big every actor's jaw was, from Kirk Douglass to Kurt Russell. He even wrote a paper on it, "Big Chins: American Imperialism and Cosmetic Surgery."

"I am the hero of this disaster movie," he said to the Free Earth members, "Do you see how big my chin is?" They shook their heads and went back to handing out flyers. Muhammad gulped more rum and his skull felt like a bobbing balloon. Memories of his first superstorm, Hurricane Sandy, filled his eyes. It hit the city in 2012 when he was 12 years old and the past slid in his mind like a watercolor painting. He saw again the same panicked faces, felt the same buzz in the street, the same euphoria at the edge of disaster.

After Hurricane Sandy passed, his uncle took him to see the tree that had smashed a car like a roller that hit dough. He saw rooftops peeled like cans and streets carpeted with branches and torn-down leaves. At night his family grilled food on the stoop and fed neighbors. Biting into the hot meat, he felt at home in the dark city. Everyone laughed easy, everyone wallowed in the free time.

More memory spilled and he saw again the slides a professor showed him in an ecology course, it was fall 2020 and he was learning about climate change. Muhammad gripped his chair during the lecture on global warming as on screen, a temperature-scale map of the earth turned from blue and green to yellow and red. It looked like the planet was catching fire, like it was a hot coal burning.

He remembered flipping through textbooks, diving into science, seeing the wind that blew on his face as the exhale of plants and trees, seeing it driven across the planet in a jet stream, seeing it knot into giant whirlpools in the sky that landed on earth in hurricanes that ripped apart homes. And the warmer the planet, he saw, the more violent the storms. A genealogy of disaster stretched before him — Hurricane Katrina and Sandy and then in 2020 was Hurricane Oscar, the first Category Three storm to hit New York.

The memories became vivid and more torrential, like someone was pouring them into his head. In 2020, Hurricane Oscar churned the sky; clouds like bowling balls smashed into the city; rain needed his face when he poked his

head outside. After the storm he waded in the dark rivers flowing through the streets. He climbed a submerged car and sat on the roof, which was just above the water. Sitting on top he listened to birds chirping in the silence as if it was after the biblical flood. And then people emerged, shocked and weeping at their destroyed city. For weeks after the storm, hundreds of bodies were found, homeless people stranded in the street, elderly stranded in the homes and those too brave or too foolish to stay inside.

Long lines stretched around supermarkets, Muhammad remembered his mom getting into a tug-of-war with another woman over a basket of groceries. At the height of the panic, he got a text from friends — SAVE THE CITY, SAVE THE PLANET: MASS MEETING ON CAMPUS. When he arrived, he saw hundreds of people in the auditorium: activists, environmentalists, doctors, nurses, a few retired cops and firefighters. They created a command structure, broke into groups and fanned out across the city to coordinate food and gas delivery and erect cell phone charging stations, and everyone wore a green arm band.

The movement didn't have a name — just action. Muhammad remembered the beautiful joy at bringing food to people abandoned by the city, by FEMA, and the people wept when he and the others came with groceries. New York was without power for two weeks and the last night of dark-

Continued on next page

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BLUESTOCKINGS PRISONER LETTER WRITING GROUP

“The communication between two humans concerning their hopes, ideas and their plights is what allows them to bond in resistance against a system that affects everyone in many different ways,” says Colorado prisoner Rachel Galindo (in a letter published in Resistance Behind Bars). Join a new Bluestockings-based group committed to communication and resistance by writing to prisoners.

MON MAY 20 • 7PM • FREE

READING: PENNY LEWIS “HARDHATS, HIPPIES, AND HAWKS”

In the popular imagination, opposition to the Vietnam War was driven largely by college students and elite intellectuals, while supposedly reactionary blue-collar workers largely supported the war effort. In “Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory,” Penny Lewis challenges this collective memory of class polarization.

SUN MAY 26 • 2:30PM • FREE

PRACTICAL ANARCHY READING GROUP: “QUEERING ANARCHISM”

NYC-based collective Practical Anarchy invites folks of all backgrounds and identities to a monthly reading group exploring what anarchism means in our current context. This month we’ll be discussing “Queering Anarchism: Addressing and Undressing Power and Desire,” edited by Deric Shan-non, J. Rogue, C.B. Daring and Abbey Volcano.

INDY FICTION

The Storm

Continued from previous page

ness, he climbed the stairs of a tall apartment building, knocking on doors. In one he heard a soft moan, knocked louder but nothing, then another moan. He slammed the door until it broke open, went in and saw a skeletal old man on the floor, his face gaunt, eyes wide and swiveling in their sockets, pleading silently for food and water. Muhammad called 911 for help, cradled the man’s head, opened a can of soup and fed it to him as the wail of an ambulance echoed in the street below.

When he went back to school, he kept wearing his green armband, not caring if people made fun of him. But at the college, it seemed like every other student wore one and had their story of helping people after the storm. When he got to class, the professor walked in, took off her jacket and she also had a green armband, and then the slides of the earth affected by global warming glowed on screen again.

After Hurricane Oscar, wearing the green armband was a status symbol; he got free drinks at bars, caressing looks from strangers, but also desperate, near panting stories from people still reeling in shock from the storm. And everyone who didn’t wear one asked what was going to happen next. The first mass meeting was called in Central Park; he arrived and ran his palm on the trees stripped of bark. It was as if the hurricane was a giant Brillo pad that scraped every leaf away and left spindly trees like twisted coat hangers. It was a sad sight and everyone picked up broken branches like evidence of a crime.

Thousands of people showed up. The ground was soggy, so people climbed a hill and joked how only the rich can afford to stay dry during a flood. The joking became wild and was recorded, going viral on social media. In it a young radical named Loli laughed as she described a methodical plan to mobilize people, seize control of the city bureaucracy, even the police, until the ruling class was cornered and then cut them off. She called it Climbing the Mountain. “It’s like *Into Thin Air* meets Freddy Krueger meets Karl Marx,” she guffawed and made a cutting gesture with her fingers like a scissor.

As he leaned against a tree, a voice said, “Looks like we have our Lenin.” He turned to see a woman, short with arched eyebrows. “But he won didn’t he,” offered Muhammad. “Sure,” she cut her eyes, “And with victories like that who needs enemies?” His face twitched then

broke into laughter, she giggled too and they held the smooth no-bark tree guffawing.

“I’m Ooni,” she offered her hand. He took it, “Muhammad.” They traded stories of the storm and she invited him to an art opening. Weeks later he went to it, an exhibit of contemporary art about post-hurricane New York. Activists with green armbands challenged Ooni about her new work, “Climbing the Mountain,” a painting/photo collage that showed debris and bodies from the hurricane shaped like a mountain and slogans from the movement pouring out of it like lava. They shouted that it played into ruling-class aesthetics. She shot back, “And violent political rhetoric is the aesthetic of the future ruling class.”

Muhammad grew with the movement. He remembered when it got real activists, elected to real positions of power. A tax was levied on Wall Street to fund climate change “proofing” the city. The thousands of new employees were unionized, added organizational muscle. A carbon tax was levied on industry and that money was used to green the energy grid. The more

to sponge up flood water. He looked at the subways and spotted the metal covers installed to keep the water from gushing into tunnels. At the city’s edge were new wetlands and oyster bays to soften the storm waves. But what shielded the city was The Wall, the nickname for the huge nearly mile-long storm surge sea barrier that spanned from Staten Island to Brooklyn; like a giant jawbone it sat behind the Verrazano Bridge.

Tomorrow, he had to report for “Wall Duty,” and like an ant crawling on a fence he would be among the crews maintaining it when the hurricane hit. Muhammad had worked for the Metropolitan Harbor Authority since he was 30, often he took his daughter on The Wall and she’d wear his hard hat and order his crew around as they drank illegal beers. A week ago, they were called into a meeting as a meteorologist showed a video of a huge foamy wheel of clouds spinning in the Atlantic.

“It’s a Category Four,” she said, and the words landed like a bad joke. Muhammad and the crew glanced at each other with scrunched eyebrows. What the fuck was she talking about? Isn’t

LOLI LAUGHED AS SHE DESCRIBED A METHODICAL PLAN TO MOBILIZE PEOPLE, SEIZE CONTROL OF THE CITY BUREAUCRACY, EVEN THE POLICE, UNTIL THE RULING CLASS WAS CORNERED.

workers owed their jobs to the Free Earth Movement, the more political power it had to create more jobs. Each new election cycle more progressive policies were enacted until welfare was enhanced and renamed Basic Income, free health care was offered and drugs decriminalized.

But scientists kept saying even with CO2 capped and cut, we now lived on a wild, changing planet. Muhammad remembered how the summers got hotter and hotter and the tropical storms harder and more frequent. In July, sweat-drenched New Yorkers borrowed the language of the Free Earth Movement and blamed the ruling class for wrecking the earth. His neighbors fanned their faces on the stoop and imitated Martin Luther King Jr. saying, “I’ve been to the mountaintop and I’ve seen the Promised Land. And the wealthy own it.” The other one leaned in, “Yeah and we got to push those motherfuckers off before they kill us.”

Blinking the memories from his eyes, Muhammad looked at the city. It was 2037 and New York was transformed. He scuffed his shoe on the street; it was made of porous material

that impossible? “It’s a Category Four,” she repeated, “one week, you have one week.” In the projector’s light her shadow on the screen was surrounded by a giant hurricane spinning toward New York. A man in a suit took her place and instructed the workers to read and sign the release forms saying, “We expect fatalities. In the case of death as stated in the second paragraph, your families will be compensated to the amount...”

BETWEEN THE TIMES

“Dad when are you coming? Love you,” she asked. He pressed repeat. “Dad when are you coming,” she asked again, “Love you!” He played her message over and over until her voice echoed in his head.

He told her he’d be on the first flight to Seattle after the storm passed, he sent her there to be with her mom, his ex-wife. Never said he’d be on The Wall, never said he signed a release form so that if he died, the Metropolitan Harbor Authority would give her enough money to be safe forever. In a few years, when she was of legal age, she could buy a home in a Safe Zone, the unaffordable neighborhoods sealed

off from Climate Change. Muhammad read the science journals avidly, he knew it was going to get worse; the storms harder and more frequent would smash the city, the summers hotter and dryer would starve the people.

He was lost inside his own thoughts so long, it surprised him to see Seward Park and a two-story-tall art installation made by his friend Ooni. It was the gutted, stripped-down frame of a room draped in white linen that flapped back and forth; inside he saw a fire encased in a tube of glass that cast warm light against the orange walls and floor.

He read the sign — “Between the Times is an examination of the emotional map of space that goes unnoticed in any official narrative; it seeks to ask questions about the too easy answers that conceal our experience of architecture.”

Someone wrote in angry graffiti: “Abstract art is elitist masturbation.” Laughing at the message, Muhammad sat next to the glass tube of fire, his head ached, his legs ached; his whole body felt as if was crumbling sand.

“Hey stranger,” Ooni said as she walked in with paint, he guessed to cover the graffiti. He swigged the rum again and said nothing. “Sorry,” she murmured and turned away. “The fragile self,” he waved his hand at the installation, “When the social context for our lives breaks down, a person feels fragile, feels like their mind is a loose as this fabric.” He pointed at the torn beige muslin billowing like flashes of forgetfulness around him. He drank again. “It represents the fragile conscious of a liberal,” he gestured at the flames inside the glass. “If it was the conscious of a radical that fire would be free.”

“Well this is awkward,” she said.

“Can we make it more awkward,” he asked and they both laughed. She sat down next to him. “Good to see you again,” she extended her hand. He shook it. They were about to jump into words when a wind rustled the muslin, twisting it in the firelight so it looked like a shredded rainbow. It reminded him of the flood story in the Bible.

“Bourgeois abstract escape artist,” he said.

“Drunken Philistine dogmatist,” she retorted. They both fell out laughing harder than before. “Well there you have it,” she chortled, paused and looked at the darkening sky.

“Everything is falling apart,” she said, “Including us but not the movement, no, never that.”

Continued on next page

So how is our merry band of self-righteous fascists?”

“We’re not fascists,” he grumbled, “We’re not scapegoating an ethnic group, we’re not targeting people; we are trying to destroy a system.”

“And the people in that system,” she asked, one eyebrow raised, “What happens to them?”

Shouting rang in the street, they looked up and through the billowing cloth they saw a few hundred people marching by, arms upraised, making the scissor-like motion as they chanted, “Cut, cut, cut, cut.”

A marcher jogged to the art installation, peeked in as Muhammad raised his arms and made the cutting gesture. The Free Earther smiled and left. “So tonight there is more than one storm,” Ooni said and took his bottle of rum and drank the last of it.

“If Wall Street lives, the planet dies and we with ...” he began, but she cut him off, waving her hand, digging into her back pocket and pulling out a flyer. It was one they handed out at the rally he was at earlier. It had the addresses of every bank and financial institution

left in the city.

“You’re not worried about the police,” she asked.

“Most of them are in the movement to,” he chuckled.

“Climbing the Mountain, right,” she prodded.

“Climbing the Mountain,” he agreed.

“People aren’t stones. They hurt when you step on them,” she said,

“unless only politically appropriate pain is recognizable?”

“People hurt when they are abandoned,” he grimaced, “and that’s what happened to the people by the ruling class. If it wasn’t for the movement we would have been abandoned to a dying planet. At least now we have a chance, at least now we have a wall.”

She eyed him, saw him struggle with an inner tension. “What’s going on with you?”

He lowered his head, shook it, “I don’t know. I feel so fucking numb.” He palmed his chest,

“I know a hell of lot more about politics than I do about myself.” Muhammad quietly looked at the room and its off kilter walls. It felt like he was in a dream. “My daughter called. I heard in her voice how much she loves me but I don’t reach out to her. She always wanted me to be a real dad but I didn’t know how.”

Ooni held his hand and asked,

LOOKING THROUGH THE BILLOWING CLOTH, THEY SAW A FEW HUNDRED PEOPLE MARCHING BY, ARMS UPRaised, MAKING THE SCISSOR-LIKE MOTION AS THEY CHANTED, ‘CUT, CUT, CUT.’

“What do you want to say to her?”

“That I’m sorry,” Muhammad felt every weight inside snap, every unnamable force gush out, “I’m sorry for treating her mother so bad, I’m sorry for letting our family fall apart.” Ooni held him as he talked then mumbled and fell asleep. He reeked of rum. His face tanned and grizzled, he was worn out. She covered him with a jacket.

When he woke, Ooni was gone.

“It’s okay,” he said, “it will be okay.” He brushed himself off, looked at “Between the Times” and hugged the tube of fire saying, “I’m an abstraction too.”

Hurrying through the city, he got to the Metropolitan Harbor Authority office. “You look like shit,” his boss said.

“I feel like it too,” he laughed and they hugged, playfully

punched each other’s shoulders. A grim morbid humor flowed between them. Muhammad buckled himself into one of the seats in the tugboat as it

went to The Wall. His gut bobbed up and down as the boat heaved through choppy waves. He dialed his daughter’s number, hung up, dialed again and hung up again. Ahead was the Verazzano Surge Wall, rising above him like series of towers that stretched beyond his eyes to the far reaches of land on either side. It connected to a long series of smaller sea walls that wrapped around Staten Island and

Brooklyn. Muhammad wondered what the future seas would be like, would they topple these walls?

BLACKOUT

People gathered on rooftops to watch the storm come. Some shot firecrackers into the air, bright sprays of color. Some just shot their guns.

The sky darkened like dirty water was poured into the clouds. Wind ruffled trees and then bent them like bows snapping after an arrow’s release. Children stuck their heads out of windows to feel the soaking rain before being yanked back.

News sites showed the last cargo ships of food supplies coming through The Wall. Millions of faces leaned into millions of screens to see the long surge barrier close, its individual walls come down like giant teeth and its swinging gates snap shut. The last of the large ships passed through, already rocking on breaking waves when the lights cut out and night fell like a curtain over the city.

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Rockaways

Continued from page 4

here, why don't you just create them?" Asked Brendan Martin, a cooperative expert and workshop leader from the Working World.

Creating community controlled, democratically run businesses is also part of the long-term recovery — not only from the storm but also from damage wrought by our capitalist system. Today, a half dozen groups are engaging in a 12-week program to develop these enterprises. People who don't even speak the same language are laughing, dreaming and working together, creating liberated spaces just as they did in

the fur coat shop and across the affected regions during the first weeks after the storm.

We know how to solve problems to crises that we see. The challenge is to see the invisible crises, like ongoing foreclosure, mass incarceration, mounting debt, sweeping privatization, accelerating climate change and enduring poverty. These are crises that we have grown accustomed to, the ones that we have come to accept. What we are doing is important not only because six months after Hurricane Sandy hundreds of people are still displaced and thousands more are trying to figure out how to put their lives back together, but because millions of us are dealing with crises every day.

Diego Ibanez is an organizer with Occupy Sandy.

The Storm

Continued from page 17

BREAKDOWN

"What the fuck happened," they shouted back and forth on the intercom. Muhammad watched as the tugboats lit the harbor with their lights. The bright beams slipped over The Wall, which was wide open as the power failure stalled the gates. Dark hills of sea water poured in and pounded the wetlands and sprayed the buildings of lower Manhattan. In the blackout, New York looked like a series of dark cathedrals.

RADIO FEVER

"Cut, cut, cut, cut," the man repeated on the radio. Ooni turned it off and leaned out of her window. Next door, a couple put their radio on the windowsill and cranked up the volume, "Cut, cut, cut." A police car shot through the street below, lights spinning, then another, then four of them in a bright stream of wailing.

WAVES

Rain hammered them. Steering the tugboat through sliding hills of sea water, Muhammad yanked the controls one way, then the other. They had a dozen boats against the gate and were driving forward in unison to shut it.

The Wall, slowly, aching-ly moved. Muhammad stared through the rain-splattered window at the giant swells racing by

the still-open gate, knowing they hit the city like a hammer. Finally, after sliding up and down the roving valleys of sea, he felt it shut. The message came in that they could back away but Muhammad saw his boss, his long-time friend, on a ladder bolted on the outside of the Wall being bludgeoned by rain and wind.

He drove his boat close, slung rope over a hook, grabbed the railing and shouted at his boss to unbuckle from it but he was tangled. Muhammad climbed rung by rung next to him. For a brief second, he looked out at the storm as a jagged bolt of lightning flashed; it was like a photograph was taken of a vast mountain range of crashing sea.

"C'mon," he shouted as he fumbled the lock and rope. His boss was shouting too but the wind ripped the words apart. Another lightning bolt struck and he saw a dark wave rising around him and for an instant it rose so high, so fast he thought he was falling into a pit.

And then darkness hit. Muhammad spun as the cold weight of water filled him. Flashing against the blackness he saw his daughter, wearing his hard hat, holding a walkie-talkie and ordering him to breathe. I can't, I can't breathe honey — he thought.

THE FIRE NEXT TIME

The day after the storm, Ooni watched candles waver in windows; in the shadows people passed, faces lit by flashlights as they pointed at buildings. Soggy

families, dripping and cold, stumbled by asking for help.

A few came in to Between the Lines to sit near the light of the encased fire. She watched a woman rub her hands, blow into them and rub them again. Another person came in, squatted, but said nothing. The silence was a shocked numbness. She looked at them, staring at a fire that gave light but no warmth, and went back to her office, grabbed a hammer, told them to get back and smashed the glass around the flames.

A searing heat singed her face; she jumped back as it rose and spread. "Goddamn it," she said, "This is why social realism sucks."

People scooted close, thanked her as they turned their faces side to side to warm their skin. As Ooni swept up the glass shards, more silhouettes stood at the outside then stepped in, gingerly for the heat, the light and the communion in the chaos. A grill was set up, the fire used to light it and food simmered.

While Ooni ripped down a curtain of muslin to wrap around a shivering couple, a patrol of Free Earth activists walked by, barking orders into their walkie-talkies and stopped at Between the Times. They had guns on their belts and torches in their hands. Stepping inside, they searched the faces of the people and looked at Ooni, who pointed at their torches. One of them handed it over.

She dipped it into the fire, curling it as it blazed bright and handed it back. They nodded and went back into the night.

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